

Study on the cinematographic image composition: frame, light, and colour as expressive elements in Roger Deakin's work

Estudio sobre la composición de imagen cinematográfica: encuadre, luz y color como elementos expresivos en la obra de Roger Deakins



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Abstract:

Cinema has become one of the most influential media in society since its origins in the 19th century for various reasons: its artistic-aesthetic, technical, narrative-communicative character, etc. In this sense, the Seventh Art has become a fundamentally creative and industrial cultural product that has evolved over the years. This study aims to address how the frames, light, and colour of the images that make up a film serve as expressive elements by considering the development and value of cinematography. To do this, this research analyses Roger Deakin's film composition in four

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Resumen:

El cine se ha convertido en uno de los medios más influyentes en la sociedad desde sus orígenes en el siglo XIX por diversos motivos: su carácter artístico-estético, técnico, narrativo-communicativo, etc. En este sentido, el Séptimo Arte se ha situado como producto creativo e industrial fundamental de la cultura que ha ido evolucionando a lo largo de los años. Teniendo en cuenta el desarrollo y valor de la cinematografía, el presente estudio intenta abordar la manera en la que los encuadres, la luz y el color de las imágenes que conforman un filme sirven como elementos expresivos. Para ello, esta investi-

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of his works: *Fargo*, *The Man Who Wasn't There*, *Sicario*, and *Blade Runner 2049*. We also consider whether the cameraman has a defined style. At the same time, we intend to highlight the director of photography professional as the figure in charge of constructing the film narrative frame.

Keywords:

Roger Deakins; director of photography; lighting; colour; frame.

gación analiza el trabajo de composición cinematográfica de Roger Deakins en cuatro de sus obras: Fargo, El hombre que nunca estuvo allí, Sicario y Blade Runner 2049. Asimismo, planteamos también si el camarógrafo tiene un estilo definido. Paralelamente, pretendemos poner en relieve el oficio del director de fotografía, como figura encargada de la construcción del cuadro del relato filmico.

Palabras clave:

Roger Deakins; director de fotografía; luz-iluminación; color; encuadre.

1. Introduction

Cinema has become an effective communication instrument since its origins at the end of the 19th century. At first, the function of moving images and its influence on education and literacy in society was studied. The Russian formalist school had already researched human beings' visual perception and how it would no longer be necessary to understand written or spoken language. Consequently, cinema's messages were guaranteed to be understood (Romaguera and Alsina, 1989). Cinema can be considered as the seventh art as it is an expressive and emotive medium. The spectator forms the last link in the cinematographic story, which occurs when the consumer receives the story (Guerín, 2004).

Consequently, the audience's subjectivity is one of the essential elements in a film and is influenced by a film's cinematography. Therefore, this research analyses expressive features in the cinematic composition of images: framing, light, and colour. We have studied the director of photography Roger Deakin's work, focusing on his feature films: *Fargo* (Joel Coen, 1996), *The Man Who Wasn't There* (Joel and Ethan Coen, 2001), *Sicario* (Denis Villeneuve, 2015), and *Blade Runner 2049* (Denis Villeneuve, 2017) to demonstrate their communicative and expressive facets.

The study of the selected works will make it possible to understand Deakins' work, its expressive function, and identify features that characterise it. We are inclined to think that he does have a personal style, which we will verify throughout the following paper. In one of his interviews, he questions whether he has his own creative style and states that he hopes to have a style that adapts to each project.

1.1. Photography direction in cinema: a technical-creative process

A film's photography is one of the essential features in the Seventh Art. It constructs the image of the film and marks its identity and aesthetics. However, this aspect is still one of the least known in a film. Thus, we decided to study a director of photography's work to evaluate the techniques he uses and present cinema as an expressive and communicative medium that enables emotions to be conveyed through the composition of images. Despite being one of the most significant cinematography aspects, this creative-technical process is still not widely known and is rarely recognised in the cinema profession. Nowadays, film photography is becoming more relevant. For instance, after awarding this category during the advertising break in the XCI Edition of the Oscar Awards, the Mexicans Guillermo del Toro and Alfonso Cuarón spoke out in defense of photography- The former considered photography direction as a representation of cinema itself, "I do not

intend to suggest which categories to exclude during the Oscar gala, but photography and editing are at the heart of our profession.” - Cuarón defended the essence of photography in cinema on his Twitter account.

1.1.1. The director of photography's functions

The director of photography's importance in films is paramount, as seen in Cortés-Selva (2014). The cameraman is in charge of the image's design. He/she makes it visible and constructs it accordingly, and plays a part in all the creative process phases of the film:

- Pre-production: visits the locations, writes reports (description of the location: dimensions, electrical outlets, aspects of the set, etc.), and interprets the screenwriter's or director's intentions in terms of light to make them a reality through the camera. The most complicated aspect is recreating another's ideas (Llinás, 1989). The script does not reveal the photographic style of a film: the director of photography will create the atmosphere through the film's image (Aronovich, 1997).
- Production: he/she composes the frame, chooses the characters' position in the scene (always in consensus with the director of the film), creates the ideal lighting (classification, the position of the camera and spotlights, intensity, contrasts, and effects, etc.) according to what is described or conveyed, chooses the optics (light setting according to the script, he/she is responsible for the camera team, and both technical and human resources).
- Post-production: supervises the editing, evaluates the color grading (color correction, contrast, luminosity), checks effects.

The director of photography is also an author (Cortés-Selva, 2020). He/she combines the essential parameters for an image to be visible: light, colour, and composition and has technical and artistic skills and a complete mastery of audiovisual language articulation. The technical and aesthetic quality of the film lies in the direction of photography. The decisions taken about it affect the expressive and communicative result and, consequently, the spectator's emotions. Ultimately, the cinematographer's actions influence the film's success (Crespo, 2013).

1.2. Notes on Roger Deakins

We have chosen to examine Roger Deakin's work because he has gained recognition in his career. He is one of the most representative people in the world of photography in cinema, capable of obtaining complex results and compositions, such as the faded and old images that fit the grey, hopeless and suffocating universe that Orwell described (Santos-Aparicio, 2019). We must also acknowledge the breadth of his work: 80 films so far (5 television series and 75 films) and how he creates them. This is why we have chosen to analyse this director of photography's work through the selected feature films.

1.3. Visions and perspectives on composition in cinema

There are very few studies that exclusively focus on Roger Deakin's work in the academic field: these include Viñolo and Suarez's (2018) paper, although centred on animation (2D technique); different texts in the magazine American

Cinematographer: Deakin's work is also referred to as another example in cinema in *The International Journal of Film and Digital Production Techniques*, but they do not focus exclusively on his cinematography.

Concerning the publications specialized in cinema, it is also worth mentioning *Cahiers du cinema España*, currently *Caimán Cuadernos de Cine*, which highlights the cinematographer or dedicates sections to interviews with Deakins. Therefore, we consider that this project contributes to mitigating certain photography direction deficiencies, strengthening its expressive and illustrative possibilities. We believe that the study on Deakin's work as a director of photography is valuable to understanding its expressive potential in film, thus presenting a new area in social sciences and communication studies.

Throughout the documentation process, texts explicitly dedicated to the profession of director of photography and the visual treatment of cinematographic images have been reviewed, such as those written by Tolan (1941), Llinás (1989), Aronovich (1997), and Crespo (2013).

The postulates from the masters of light are necessary, Almendros (1980), those of Loiseleux (2005), and, more recently, Cortés-Selva's investigations (2014; 2019; 2020). Likewise, the reflections on the expressiveness of colour made by González-Requena (1989) have been considered, who at the same time alludes to Turner.

On the other hand, to shape the analysis of the expressive elements analysed in Deakin's work, we have referred to Salt's (2006) and Brown's theories (2008). In the frames used in the case study, we address colour based on Heller's (2008) claims. We have referred to Gutiérrez-San Miguel's (2006; 2020) contributions regarding the treatment of lighting.

1.4. Objectives and hypothesis

The research is based on a general objective: to examine the composition of the cinematographic image in the director of photography Roger Deakin's work.

The study also includes specific objectives that stem from the main one:

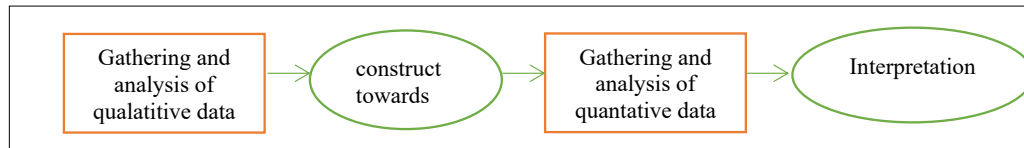
1. To observe and analyse the frame, light, and colour as expressive elements that construct the cinematographic story created by Roger Deakins in the selected films.
2. To observe similarities between the works.
3. To identify the techniques that predominate and their frequency. This way, we can verify whether this director of photography has his own personal style.

After establishing the objectives, we propose to start from the hypothesis that Roger Deakin's work is crucial to the meaning of the films in which he works. The "technical-artistic" resources he uses- framing, light, and colour- distinguish his work expressively.

The composition of images in Roger Deakin's works, characterised by the recurrence of some of these technical and artistic elements (e.g., frequent use of close-ups), leads us to believe that this director of photography has acquired his own style throughout his career.

2. Method

We examine Deakin's photography direction through a mixed-method, using qualitative and quantitative techniques to “use the strengths of both types of inquiry, combining them and trying to minimise their potential weaknesses” (Hernández-Sampieri, 2014: 532). We started the research with an initial hypothesis to attempt to verify it. We developed a sequential exploration following Casasempere's (2020) approach:



Source: Prepared by the authors. Based on the Casasempere outline (2020)

The qualitative content analysis technique allows us to interpret the filmed texts. Based on a visual reading as a tool for collecting information (Andreu and Perez, 2006), it is structured into several phases: (a) observation of the object of study-viewing the selected works-; (b) data collection; (c) analysis of feature-length films; (d) identification of the frequency of the use of the research variables; (e.) coding; (f) obtaining results and interpretation; and (g) conclusions.

The quantitative procedures are applied to measure the frequency of using the typologies in the first category analysed (the frames).

2.1. The sample

The selected feature-length films were chosen as a sample for several reasons: to analyse works made in different periods (late 20th century, early 21st century, and current decade) and by other directors, selecting two narratives from each of them. Regarding Fargo, this work marks the consolidation of his working relationship with the Coen brothers¹, the two creators with whom Deakins has worked the most in his career to date (he has directed photography in more than ten of their films). This is also an essential element in his filmography (his second Academy nomination for Best Photography, 1997). In *The Man Who Wasn't There*, we believe that black and white photography enables us to study a different perspective of compositional-cinematographic creation. Regarding *Sicario*, it is his most important work before receiving the Academy Award (2017). Finally, *Blade Runner 2049* is selected because his work on this film received recognition from academics in the cinema industry, winning his first Oscar in Best Photography (2018).

¹ We must clarify that Fargo was directed by Joel Coen, although the script was also written by Ethan Coen. Usually both brothers are the authors of all their films, they co-direct and co-write.

2.2. Categories Analysed

Regarding the variables analysed –frame, colour, and lighting– it is necessary to describe them.

The frame shows the prevailing typology and, consequently, its expressive intention. It is made up of a total of 1,339. The figure and its duration differ in each of the works studied (*cf.* Exact data in the Results section). It is necessary to clarify that the selected works do not have the same length. Therefore, the study of this first variable is centred on the film's scenes (determined by the Field paradigm²) as this ensures that the amount of time analysed is as similar as possible in each film. The frame classification is based on those set out by Salt (2006) and Brown (2008). Table (1) allows us to gather these authors' typologies, a brief description, and its purpose.

Table 1

Type of frame		Extension/Description	Use/Value/Funcionality
Close-up	Extreme Close-up or bleeding	Image of his/her face: from his/her chin to their head.	-Expressive function. -Increases drama.
	Long	Image of his/her body: from the waist to his/her head	-Descriptive function.
	Medium or bust	Image: upper part of his/her body	-Expressive function. -Increases the drama
	Medium or torso	Image: lower part of his/her body.	-Expressive function.
	Extreme Close-up shot	Image: eyes and mouth	-Expressive function. -Dramatic intentionality.
	Foreshortening	Image: two characters, one with his/her back to us and the other facing us.	-Expressive function. -Conversations and relationships between characters (point of view). -The audience's empathy (empathy with the character).
American Shot		Image: from his/her head to legs (3/4 part of his/her body)	-Narrative function.
Full Shot		Image: scene (a place where the action takes place), with or without characters (full body shot from afar)	-Descriptive function (contextualisation).
Medium Shot		Image: from the head until the waist.	-Expressive function, occasionally descriptive.
Close-up		Image: eyes and/or mouth of the character or another part of the body or an object with relevance in action.	-Expressive function.
Full shot		Image: two or more actors (shows full body).	-Descriptive function.

2 According to Field (1979: 15), a script has 120 pages, which equates to approximately two hours. In other words, each page of the script means a minute on the screen. If we take this into account, and based on its paradigm the first act would be the first half hour of the film, the second act until 90 minutes and the third act until the end of the film.

Cover shot		Image: object or character that is not the central one (related to the scene).	-Technical use (avoiding the jump cut). -Inform or introduce elements of interest.
Reaction shot		Image: stimulus-character's response to the scene before an event or another's action.	-Expressive function.
Connection shot		Image: character looking at something and object or subject that is being observed.	-Narrative function.
Insert shot Emphasis Atmosphere	Practical	Image: resource used by a character.	-Descriptive function (informs).
	Image: character and their impact on the action.	-Expressive function Connect with the main action.	
	Image: isolated part of a scene.	-Narrative function. -Used humorously or as an ironic counter-argument.	

Source: based on Salt's (2006) and Brown's (2008) classification of frames

Despite analysing the use of all these frames, we will examine the use of close-ups since it is the scale that most influences the audience's emotions as they can easily observe the character's expressions. Although there are a large number of frames, close-ups have the most dramatic influence on the film and can capture the audience's attention: "the stronger the reason for using a close-up, the more this frame will help to create a more effective storyline" (Mascelli, 1965: 195).

The information about the types of frames used in each of the chosen footage is collected in analysis sheets-tables³-. This enables us to find out the most used shots and the number of times they are used. In the results section, the percentages referring to this unit of analysis will be shown in graphs.

³ We have not specifically provided all the tables by film studied in this publication, due to their length, but we will state the most significant data accompanying them with a graph that shows the percentages that summarise the presence and/or repetition of the use of stagesetting.

Table 2

CODING TEMPLATE	
Basic information	
Name of the film	
Duration of the sample	
Total number of frames	
Types of frames Quantification/Frequency (No.)	
Close-up	Extreme Close-up
	Long
	Medium or bust
	Medium or torso
	Close-up
	Slanted
American Shot	
Long shot	
Medium Shot	
Close-up	
Full shot	
Cover shot	
Reaction shot	
Connection shot	
Insert shot	Practical
	Emphasis
	Atmosphere

Source: Created by the authors based on the different shots coined by the theories on frame and planning by Salt (2006) and Brown (2008)

Colour is the second category in this study. We intend to determine what Roger Deakin's is trying to express and communicate by observing the recurrence of concrete tones through colour. The perception of colours can be considered subjective. Therefore, we refer to Heller's studies (2008) about the sensations they produce, applying his theories to the aspects shown in the cinematographic stories. It is also necessary to consider that this element, besides being related to specific emotions, has connotations in each film. Colours are used to identify situations at particular times in the plot and even prevail over and/or accompany the characters. In this sense, colour is highly significant in the visual language. Therefore, we have decided to analyse the film as a whole and not fragment the film's analysis. Reducing the sample could affect the meaning of the work (loss of data, a dispersed reading) and, consequently, how it is communicated.

In cinema, colour has become a tool that brings us closer to reality and makes the stories more believable. Similarly, it conveys and/or evokes emotions or sensations, enabling it to acquire a dramatic meaning in the work. As we have mentioned before, we connect Heller's theory of colour to each film's grammar in this paper's results section. The tones⁴, which are mainly used in the object films of study and contribute to their semantics⁵, are shown in the following table.

Table 3

Colour		Expressive function/Concept
White		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Means emptiness, associated with a lack of feelings. - "White death" is freezing to death. -Colour of the deceased, spirits, and ghosts. Dead people's faces lose their vibrancy. -Relationship: the beginning of the world was the beginning of evil. -Used in religious rituals (sacrifices to atone for human lives). -Political meaning: surrender. -Link to the truth.
Red		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The colour of danger, the devil, blood (it represents violence, aggressiveness, war, destruction, cruelty, rage, anger, excess, stress, danger, evil, risk, irritation). -Red and black: danger and prohibition. -Colour of the immoral. -Associated with the concept of strength, power, fire (liturgical red). -Religious use, primitive rituals: sacrifices with bloodshed.
Black		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Death, mourning, darkness, dirtiness, negativity, lack of light, loneliness, pain, sadness, grief, depression, mystery. -Strength, power.
Beige	Beige-brown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Colour of cosiness, every day, ordinary. -Positive value in living spaces. -Creates the ideal climate of a room.
	Beige-pale yellow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Colour of traitors (Ancient tradition: Judas-Isariote betrayed Jesus, who often appears in a pale yellow robe).
Blue		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Linked values: security, intelligence, reflection, mental activity, rationality, discretion, precision, order, rectitude, honesty, professionalism, solidity, sobriety, seriousness, legitimacy, legality, justice, morality. It is also related to purity, lightness, freedom, spirituality, greatness, life, energy, vitality, strength, joy, hope, good, positivity, and happiness.
Yellow		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Represents beauty and worth. -Symbol of wealth (gold). -Related terms: luxury, power, abundance, prosperity, opulence -Linked to the sun Gods (Helios, Apollo, Sun). , divinity -Legends: where there are yellow flowers, there is buried gold. -Colour of mental illumination/enlightenment, wisdom.

4 Colours are shown in the table in order of appearance in each of the works (cf. in epigraph of the results) and their connotations vary in different situations and according to the tones that accompany them.

5 We have only included illustrative and expressive modes of the dominant colours that have a relationship with the discourse of the object films of study.

Green	-Symbol of life in the broadest sense. -Colour of hope. -Other related concepts: energy, freedom, health, and balance. -Associated with nature and the countryside. Green nature is grandiose/great. -Green is related to material and spiritual well-being.
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Source: Created by the authors based on Heller's (2008) theories

In the third variable analysed, light, we have tried to find the moments when Deakins has attempted to transmit some emotion or information to the audience in the four films through the use of one or another type of lighting, as a consequence of his code's symbolic manifestations. The use and handling of light are essential skills in a director of photography's work and a fundamental resource in the audiovisual narrative. To study this, we refer to Gutierrez San Miguel's (2006) approaches that have allowed us to observe the three lighting techniques used:

- zones: constituted by a series of lights to a greater or lesser extent or the contrary. The light shapes the space highlighting the intense narrative action. In the same shot, there are two important focal points of attention for the viewer. The two scenes of the narrative that will take place at the same time are highlighted through them;
- spotlighting: the use of powerful spotlights in certain parts highlights characters or objects that will have a dramatic intention; the rest is left in semi-darkness. Type of dramatic light used to highlight tension (Gutiérrez San Miguel, 2020: 301);
- Masses: characterised by giving the image a light grading similar to that produced by natural light.

Light is also observed from the beginning to the end of each of the films, as is colour, to provide different contributions in the following section.

In conclusion, we incorporate various methodologies to meet this paper's objectives. Hybridisation contributes to a triangulation of data (Gómez-Diago, 2010).

3. Results

We will present the results obtained from the samples analysed: the four films chosen in which Deakins has worked as a director of photography. To maintain an organised structure, we transfer the relative data of each of these works, following the chronology of the years they have been produced, starting with the oldest (*Fargo*) and ending with the most recent (*Blade Runner 2049*). Regarding the first variable studied, we have gathered the number of frames and the types of scale used in the shot by creating the table model (included in the previous section). This measurement allows us to extract percentages and interpret data.

Regarding the other two variables: colour and lighting, we have also shown the results descriptively. The color analysis unit has not been studied in the work *The Man Who Wasn't There* because although it was shot with this technique, it is in black and white. However, the connotations are presented because of the value of the lighting, which is applied with a specific communicative and emotional intention.

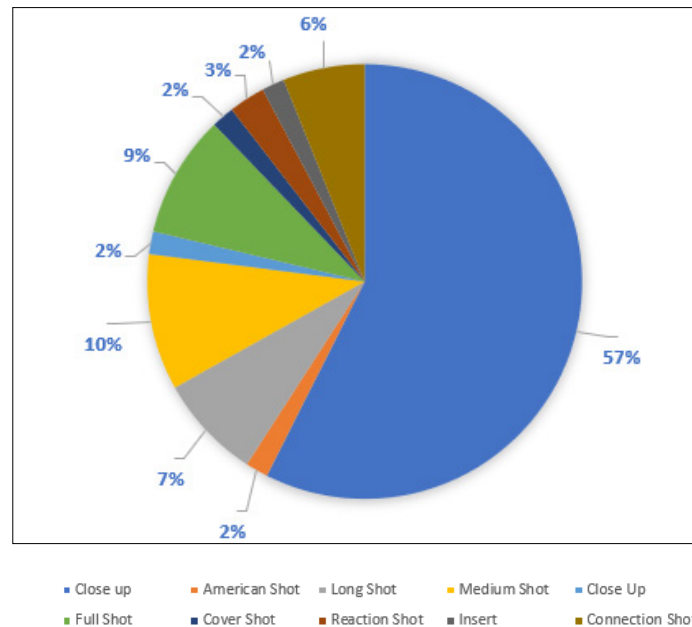
3.1. Fargo

A shy and timid man, married to a millionaire's daughter who prevents him from enjoying his fortune, decides to hire two criminals to kidnap his wife so that he can set up his own business with the ransom money. Due to a series of unforeseen circumstances, three brutal murders are added to the kidnapping, forcing the police to intervene.

3.1.2. Frequency of the framing and close-ups

According to the coding carried out on the variable- framing types- in the film Fargo, during the first 32.50 minutes of the film, it was observed that close-ups were the most used. Specifically 170 times, regarding the total number, 296. The medium shot was the second most used frame- 30 times. The least used were the American shot, the insert, and the cover shot, which appear five times each.

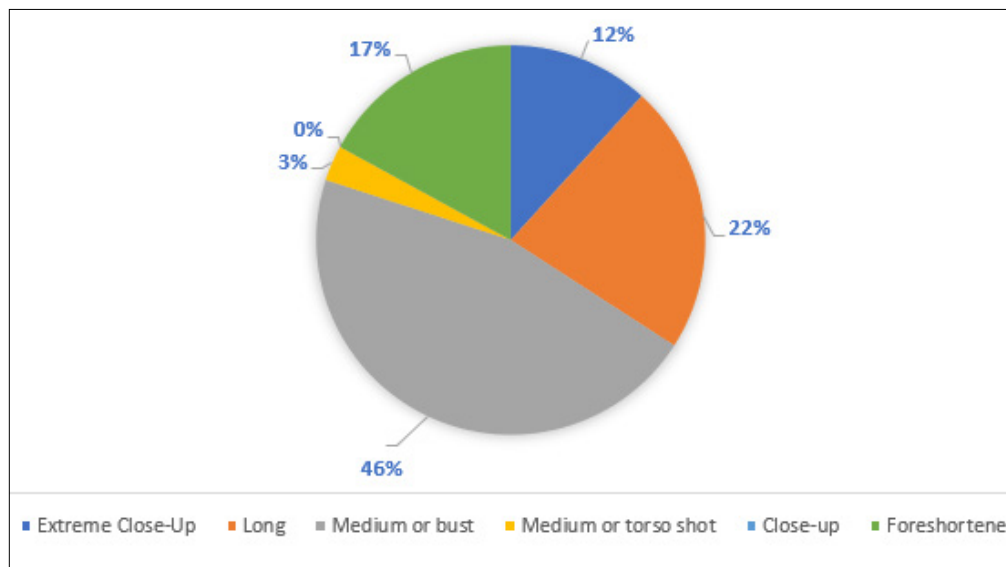
Graph 1: Percentages on the types of frames



Source: created by the authors

Considering the use of the close-ups, the most used is the medium shot, which is used 78 times. The next most used is the long shot and foreshortened, 38 and 29 times, respectively. The most unusual is the torso (5 samples), and there is a lack of extreme close-ups.

Graph 2: Percentages on the uses of different types of close-ups



Source: created by the authors

3.1.2. Colour

The Colour in *Fargo* has been used intentionally and dramatically. This tension is created by relating this resource to specific characters or situations. However, it is true that in this work, the use of white [absence of Colour (Heller, 2008: 164)] is omnipresent. The recurrence of white is observed in the snowy landscapes of the locations representing North Dakota and Minnesota (use of colour to give credibility to the story and show reality). It also seems to accentuate some of the characters' lack of morals and empathy: one of the two criminals, Gaear Grimsrud (Peter Stormare), whom Jerry Lundegaard contacts (William H. Macy) to kidnap his wife, wears a white jumper throughout the whole film (figure 1). It is not insignificant that Grimsrud is a man lacking in ethics and compassion (insensitive character: cf. in table 3). Simultaneously, white contrasts with other colours, such as black and red or maroon, which also have a prominent presence in the work. Red is strictly related to death throughout the whole film through different clothing. All the characters that wear a red garment or a colour in the same range, usually maroon, end up being killed during the film. We can observe this connection for the first time during the scene where Lundegaard (Kristin Rudrüd) is kidnapped. She is knitting a maroon sweater (figure 2).

Figure 1. Gear in a white jumper



Source: Fotograma *Fargo*

Figure 2. Jean knits with maroon wool



Source: Fotograma *Fargo*

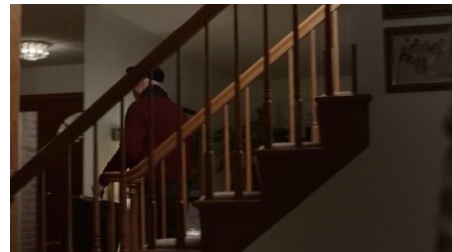
The police officer who will die later in the film also wears maroon (figure 3). Shortly afterward, two people observe the event, and it leads to a chase in which they are all killed, one of these witnesses is wearing a red coat. Another character wearing the same coloured sweater is Wade Gustafson (Harve Presnell), Jean's father. This colour is relevant if we consider this character wearing this garment when Carl (Steve Buscemi) kills him (figure 4). Simultaneously, Carl, who also dies in the same way as the other characters, can be seen wearing similar clothing (retake figure 1).

Figure 3. Police with a maroon jacket



Source: Fotograma *Fargo*

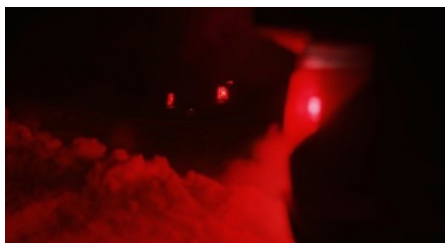
Figure 4. W. G. and dark red jumper



Source: Fotograma *Fargo*

After the police officer is murdered, there is a car chase between two cars, which collide. In this scene, white, red, and black tones are reflected on the white snow (figure 5), and thus the landscape on the hill is tinted in red and black. Taking Heller's studies as a reference (2008), we can verify that the author directly relates red to rage and black to death. Furthermore, he adds the mixture of these two colors, obtaining maroon, which is strictly linked to the concept of danger. Therefore, we deduce that it could also be linked to death.

Figure 5. Image tinted in red



Source: Fotograma *Fargo*

3.1.3. Lighting

In *Fargo*, this variable has a functional nature that provides realism to outdoor locations, landscapes where the light is mainly natural. In this way, the only intentionality observed is to make the story credible. However, one exception is when the police officer is killed, and the chase takes place, mentioned in the previous section. In this scene, the lighting becomes the protagonist, and we observe an intentional use of spotlights, which are reflected in the two kidnappers' eyes. First use: the reflection of the light from the police car's headlights after the officer's death shows Carl's blood-spattered face. The purpose of spotlighting, in this case, is to focus the shot on his expression of horror after the event, increasing the drama in the scene (figure 6). Second use: during the car chase, this same type of lighting is used to show Gaear. Now, the light is focused again on this character's gaze; it is focused on the highway and the car he is following to see the character's behaviour and/or actions, his anger, and the absence of emotions (figure 7).

Figure 6: Image expression of horror



Source: Fotograma *Fargo*

Figure 7: Lighting showing gaze



Source: Fotograma *Fargo*

Seconds later, when Gaear is about to pull the trigger to kill one of the witnesses, the car's backlight is reflected on him, and the red coloured gun reinforces the notion of rage (figure 8).

Figure 8. Car light shows the character.

Source: Fotograma *Fargo*

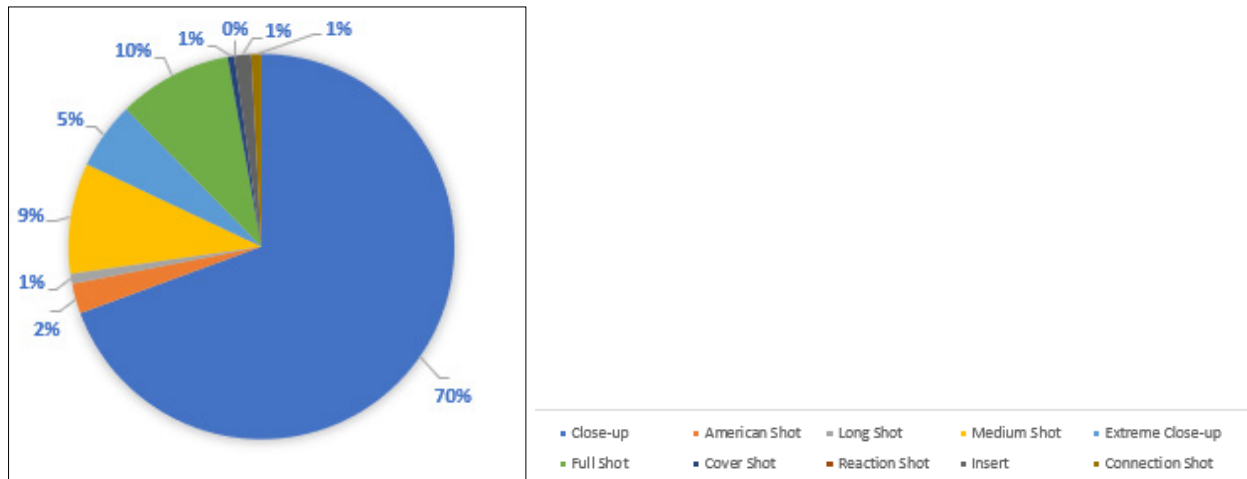
3.2. *The man who wasn't there*

Summer 1949. Ed Crane (Billy Bob Thornton), an introverted barber in a small Northern California town, is unsatisfied with his life. His wife's (Frances McDormand) affairs enable him to use blackmail to change his apathetic existence⁶.

3.2.1. *Frequency of frames and close-ups*

During the first scene (42 minutes and 53 seconds), the analysis of *The Man who wasn't there* reveals that close-ups are the most used frames, which coincides with *Fargo*. Specifically, 247 times compared to the overall 346 frames.

Graph 3: Percentages on the type of framing

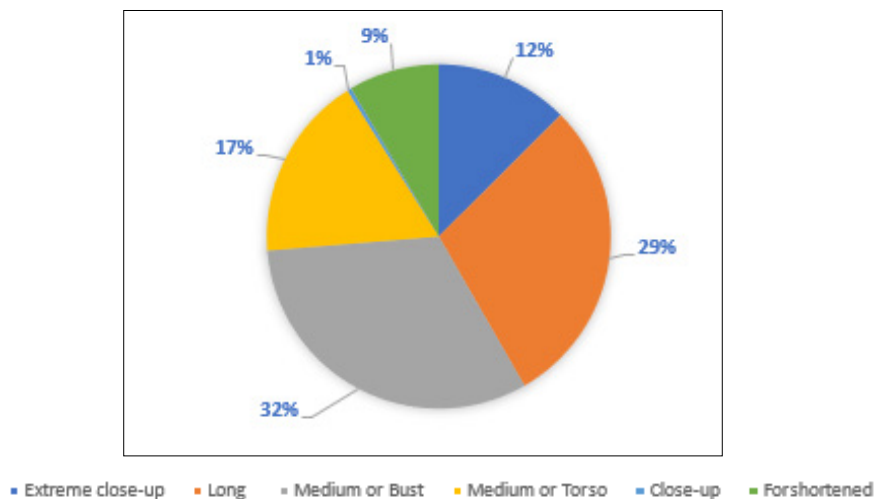


Source: created by the authors

⁶ Available at: <https://www.filmaffinity.com/cl/film570402.html>

The full shot appears 34 times, once more than the medium shot. The least used is the cover shot, only on 2 occasions. The full shot and the connection shot are used in three images. The reaction shot doesn't exist in this work. The most used close-ups are the medium or bust shot, used 79 times, and the long shot appears 72 times. We find that the medium or torso shot or the extreme close-up is used 43 and 31 times, respectively, and the foreshortened in 21 compositions. The least used is the close-up, which is only used once.

Graph 4: Percentages on the use of different types of close-ups



Source: Created by the authors

3.2.2. Lighting

The Lighting in the *Man Who Wasn't There* has a two-fold function: both expressive and dramatic. By modifying this film to black and white, the lighting is different from the rest of the films selected for this study, mainly because of how this film is made. The works lacking colour are primarily shot on sets that are partly illuminated to enhance objects or characters and attempt to manage the light on the scene better (Tolan, 1941).

The images that make up the film are not grainy. This technique gives higher quality to the work and allows us to obtain a unique texture. A smaller depth of field is created through an open diaphragm, and consequently, the backgrounds appear out of focus. This is much more evident when the light is on the characters to make them stand out (figure 9). This aspect is more noticeable in those scenes that the lighting creates a backlighting effect (recurrent throughout the film); placing the subjects in front of the light source and the camera in a lateral position or behind them, using direct, harsh and intense lighting, creating an effect that adds drama to the action. For instance, the use of background lighting with this

aim can be seen when the main character, Ed Crane (Billy Bob Thornton), is debating whether to negotiate with a stranger he has just met; he will have to invest \$10, 000 which he will try to obtain by blackmailing his wife's lover (figure 10).

Figure 9. Direct light Figure



Source: Photo. *The man who wasn't there*

10. Backlighting



Source: Photo. *The man who wasn't there*

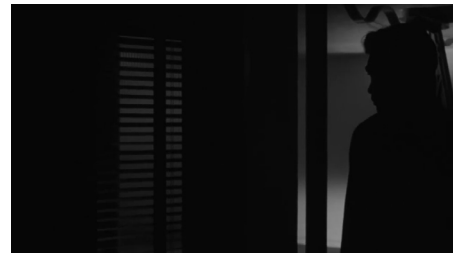
This type of backlighting will be repeated later, when Big Dave (James Gandolfini), Ed's lover, tells Ed that he has received a bribe letter (figure 11). And it will be used again when the protagonist goes to her lover's office (figure 12). The lack of lighting also characterises this scene. The intentionality to leave this image so dark increases the drama (a technique that coincides with the narrative: the dramatic tension is extreme and ends in murder).

Figure 11: Backlighting of rival characters



Source: Photo. *The man who wasn't there*

Figure 12: Twilight in the office



Source: Photo. *The man who wasn't there*

At another point in the film, Roger Deakins uses a type of zone lighting: the scene in which Ed and Big Dave have a fight that culminates in the death of Big Dave takes place in one of the big warehouses with low lighting, and it focuses on some mannequins and the staircase that leads to the office where he has the altercation. The violent conflict between the two men is shown at the top and center of the image, in the background and focus, using backlighting again through which we can see the two silhouettes hitting each other (figure 13).

Deakins also uses the spotlighting technique. We can see this in the scene in which Freddy Riedenschneider (Tony Shalhoud), Fred's wife's lawyer, performs a monologue where he poses how he will present a defense before the jury, highlighting his backlit figure, from which a pronounced shadow is cast (figure 14).

Figure 13. Warehouse conflict



Source: Photo. *The man who wasn't there*

Figure 14. Rehearsing his defense



Source: Photo. *The man who wasn't there*

However, the predominant lighting in the film is mass lighting. By way of example, we can mention all the scenes in the hairdresser's and outdoors, especially during the day (figure 15).

Figure 15: Image of the hairdresser



Source: Fotograma, *The Man who wasn't there*

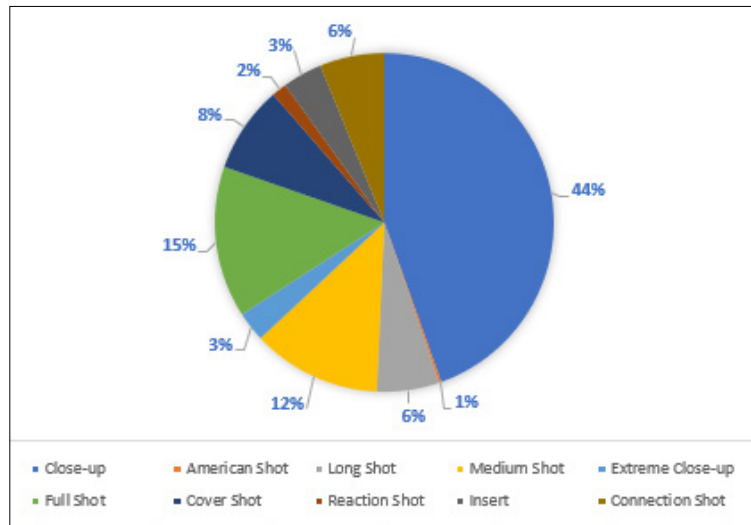
3.3. *Sicario*

In the border area between the United States and Mexico, young Kate Macer, an idealistic FBI agent, is recruited by an elite Government force to fight drug trafficking. Under Matt Graver's command, a cold member of the government forces, and Alejandro, an enigmatic advisor, the team takes on a mission that leads the woman to question her convictions about the war on drugs and the limits of the law.

3.3.1. *Frequency of framing and close-ups*

After viewing *Sicario*, we have been able to quantify that 188 close-ups are used compared to the 422 frames seen in 39 minutes and 25 seconds. The full shot and the medium shot appear 61 and 52 times, respectively. 35 cover shots are used, 26 connection shots, 16 insert shots, and 12 close-ups. The American shot is only used once, and the reaction shot appears 6 times.

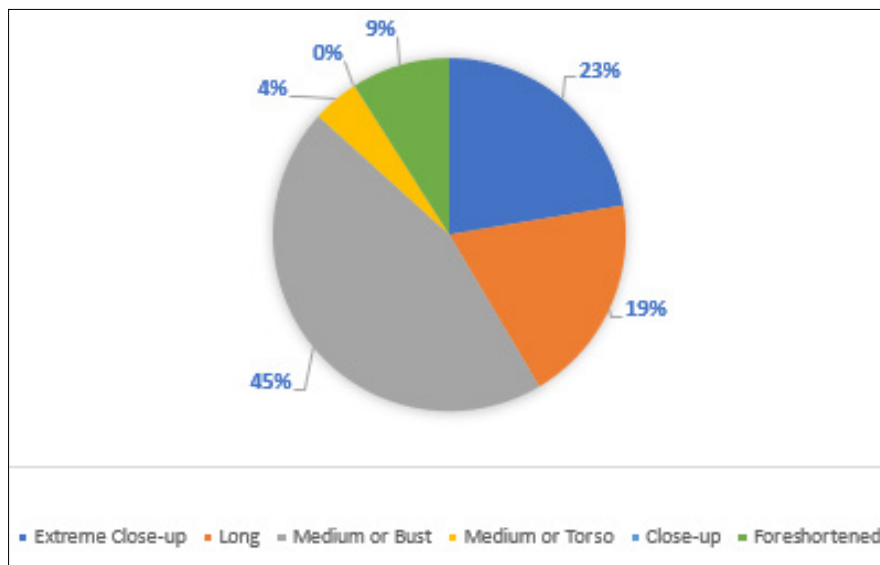
Graph 5: Percentages for the type of frames



Source: Created by the authors

Regarding the use of the close-ups, we can see that the most used is the medium or bust shot, shown 85 times in the 188 total compositions. The extreme close-up appears 42 times, the long shot 36, and the foreshortened 17. The least recurring are the torso, which appears 8 times, and there are few close-ups.

Graph 6: Percentages on the use of different types of close-ups



Source: Created by the authors

3.3.2. Colour

The Colour in *Sicario* is used for descriptive purposes. The beige tones stand out in this case (brown tone) used in the costumes, scenes (rooms), and part of the set (furniture), to create an atmosphere that envelops the characters (cf in table 3), especially Alejandro (Benicio del Toro) and Matt (Josh Brolin). Kate (Emily Blunt) is striking dressed in blue, representing justice and/or as a manifestation of legality (cf in table 3). The predominance of this colour around Kate's character is evident in the scene where she boards a plane with Alejandro and Matt, in which the blue tone of her t-shirt contrasts with the rest of the place, which is full of beige tones (figure 16). Throughout her story, it is revealed that she has been tricked and used to perform a mission in Mexico. Consequently, her moral principles begin to be compromised.

From this moment on, we observe that her clothes (iconic element- blue t-shirt) which she has worn for most of the film, changes to grey and finally white (associated with truth, cf in table 3) as she prepares to attack Alejandro after discovering that he was working for the Medellín cartel (Figure 17).

Figure 16: Image of Kate's blue clothing



Source: Fotograma *Sicario*

Figure 17: the image of Kate (white t-shirt)



Source: Fotograma *Sicario*

Again, beige (pale yellow tone) and blue is shown around Alejandro's character. At first, he appears surrounded by a beige tone (it could have a connotation associated with betrayal: cf en table 3). Later, he is associated with the bluish range, when we believe that he is behaving honestly (the scene in which the beige jacket is removed and he is wearing a blue shirt), as he is preparing to arrest one of the cartel leaders. The audience is not yet aware of the operation's ins and outs or that he is a hitman (Figure 18). As Alejandro's true identity is revealed; he begins to wear darker clothing and is usually shown in semi-darkness. Finally, his clothing is black (figure 19).

Figure 18. Image Alejandro's blue clothing



Source: Fotograma *Sicario*

Figure 19. Image Alejandro (dark clothing)



Source: Fotograma *Sicario*

3.3.3. Lighting

The Lighting in *Sicario* is mainly used as a descriptive resource as it makes the story credible. Although there is also a specific, intentional treatment of the light, we emphasize spotlighting to highlight characters during the film's start. The image of the main character, Kate, is constructed using this lighting system. The red reflection on her face intensifies the drama; through a curtain of the same refracted tone on the wall (projection of the event to be told), a raid will occur. This

technical result with reddish tones can also be linked to the concepts of violence, blood. We believe that this light scheme's creation is deliberate since it does not occur in the previous shot (figure 20).

Figure 20. The image reflects red on her face



Source: *Fotograma Sicario*

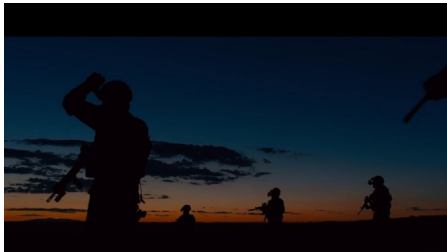
Figure 21. Image lit by spotlighting



Source: *Fotograma Sicario*

This spotlighting is applied to isolate characters, for example, the scene at the bar, where the light focuses on the character Kate to separate her from everything around her, which reveals that she is lost in her thoughts (figure 21), mostly since the FBI has previously been seen prohibiting her from taking legal action against the cartel to prevent the failure of the operation. Likewise, the use of backlighting increases tension, and this expressiveness can be highlighted. We cite a crucial moment in the film when backlighting announces the raid that will take place in one of the tunnels used by the cartel for drug trafficking, hence the strength in its construction (figure 22). Deakins uses this technique again to highlight Alejandro's figure, closing his arc of argument, ready to end the life of the cartel leader who murdered his wife and daughter (Figure 23).

Figure 22. Backlighting prelude to the climax



Source: *Fotograma Sicario*

Figure 23. Alejandro against the backlighting



Source: *Fotograma Sicario*

All these scenes in the work have been shaped through the lighting, which is no longer descriptive, making the staging entirely aesthetic, effective, and carefully constructed.

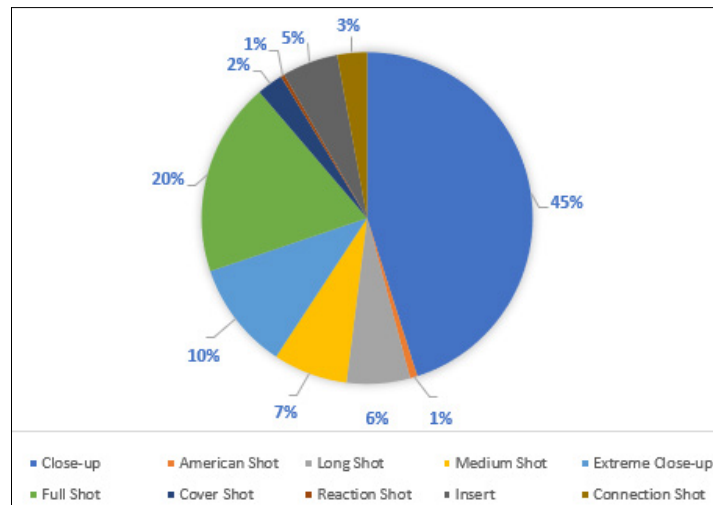
3.4. *Blade Runner 2049*

Thirty years after the first film's events, a new blade runner, K (Ryan Gosling), discovers a profound hidden secret that could end the chaos that prevails in society. K's discovery leads him to begin the search for Rick Deckard (Harrison Ford), a blade runner who went missing 30 years ago ⁷

3.4.1. *Frequency of framing and close-ups*

In *Blade Runner 2049*, we can observe that the most used frame in the first act, whose duration extends to minute 28:31, is the foreshortened, 124 of 275 frames in total. They make up this global sum, 52 full shots, 29 close-ups, 20 medium shots, 17 long shots, 15 insert shots, 8 connection shots, 7 cover shots, 2 images constructed with an American shot, and only one reaction shot.

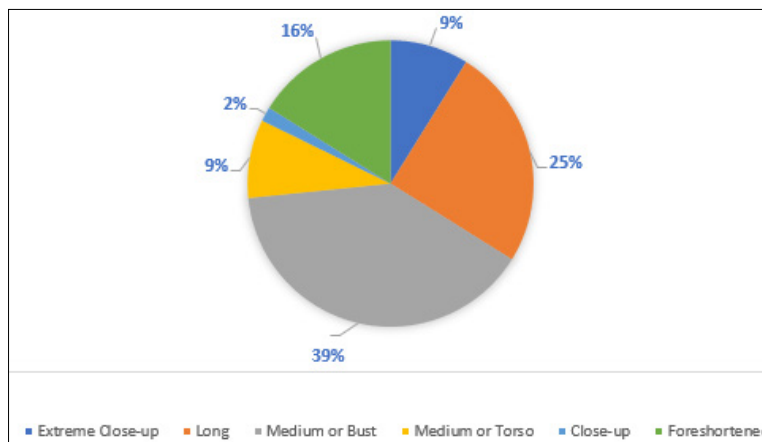
Graph 7: Percentages on the types of frames



Source: created by the authors

⁷ Available at: <https://www.filmaffinity.com/cl/film236626.html>

Graph 8: Percentages on the use of different types of close-ups



Source: created by the authors

There are 49 medium or bust shots in the first shots, and the long shots and foreshortened have been used 31 and 30 times, respectively. The scales with the least number of appearances, 11, are the extreme close-ups and the medium or torso shots. The close up is only shown in two situations.

3.4.2. Colour

Colour's purpose in *Blade Runner 2049* is essentially expressive and acquires relevance in the film's construction and flow, making it a central theme: creating a futuristic world. Therefore, we will examine how different pigments relate directly to other aspects of the plot, implicitly or explicitly. Yellow is a constant in the protagonist's environment, a replicant in charge of conducting an investigation, Officer K. Already in the opening image; we can see this dominant aspect: K goes to a lonely area where a house seems to be abandoned. It is an organic scene (earthy tones, browns, mixed with greys), in which the yellow door stands out (figure 24). Later, in the same place, he finds the first clue. Specifically, he finds yellow flowers (figure 25).

Figure 24. Image of the start: yellow door



Source: Fotograma *Blade Runner 2049*

Figure 25. K finds yellow flowers (sign)



Source: Fotograma *Blade Runner 2049*

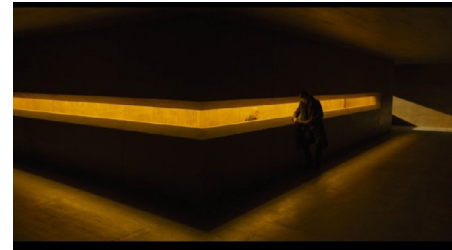
Later, K receives a call. There is a bright sign with orange-yellow letters behind him, which can reinforce the idea of going ahead with the case (figure 26). As we have pointed out, this tone related to K's character is maintained throughout the film. Another reference: his visit to the replicant factory, bathed in a yellow atmosphere (Figure 27). However, it is tinted in a golden colour, which matches the film's text: the company is positioned as the most important in the world after saving the planet from catastrophe (Figure 28).

Figure 26. K with a bright sign



Source: Fotograma *Blade Runner 2049*

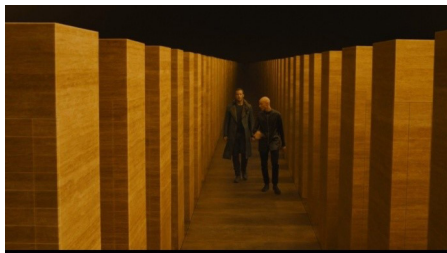
Figure 27. Replicant factory



Source: Fotograma *Blade Runner 2049*

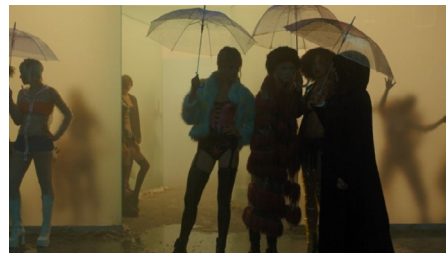
Likewise, yellow is consolidated when discovering that one of the replicants has had a child, a woman who Deckard was attracted to in *Blade Runner* (Ridley Scott, 1982). This tone becomes associated with these characters and even with other replicants presented against a golden ochre backdrop (Figure 29).

Figure 28. Replicant industry



Source: Fotograma *Blade Runner 2049*

Figure 29. The replicant, golden ochre backdrop



Source: Fotograma *Blade Runner 2049*

We found that the recurrence of yellow is seen throughout the whole story. There are two examples: the scene in the car; K and Joi (Ana de Armas) continue with the investigation. She is wearing a yellow raincoat that contrasts with the dark tones, even with black shades (figure 30), the closing image in which the protagonist finds Deckard (case closed), constructed in an orange atmosphere, intensification of yellow, this use of this tone seems to reach its maximum expression (figure 31).

Figure 30. Image of Joi's yellow clothes



Source: Fotograma *Blade Runner 2049*

Figure 31. Closing shot



Source: Fotograma *Blade Runner 2049*

Green is the colour that represents, among other concepts, life (cf in table 3: Heller's studies outline this, and it is possible to associate it with the meaning of the film). Green acquires importance in *Blade Runner 2049*. We examine the work's implicit message that asks the questions: what makes us humans? The answer is not the phenomenon of birth itself, as the film speaks about the mere fact of living, something that makes us human, and the act of making our own decisions

and being free. Deakins expresses the idea of freedom in the character Joi, who moves around autonomously in an environment bathed in this colour (figure 32). Similarly, when K suspects that he might be a replicant's son, the image contains this pigment (Figure 33),

Figure 32. Image of Joi (a sign of freedom)



Source: Fotograma *Blade Runner 2049*

Figure 33. K reflects on his origin



Source: Fotograma *Blade Runner 2049*

It is also worth mentioning the forest scene, where we can see Deckard's daughter and the replicant. Although it is a hologram, it does not live since it is enslaved, a state that breaks away from the film's philosophy (figure 34).

Figure 34. A holographic image of a forest



Source: Fotograma *Blade Runner 2049*

Another remarkable colour in the film is white, associated with the truth (cf. in table 3). The room where Deckard's daughter is confined is in this tone, and her clothing coincides with this chromatic range. This colour influences the meaning of the work; since she is the one who is looking for K, it is the key to his investigation. And something is striking in the composition of the images in the scene between K and Deckard's daughter, regarding the use of this white, the first time the main character speaks to her, he does not know the truth. Here we can see that he goes outside to a partial snow-covered place (figure 35); later, when K finds out the truth, the same area is completely covered in snow (figure 36).

Figure 35. K's departure, light snow coverage



Source: Fotograma *Blade Runner 2049*

Figure 36. K finds out the truth



Source: Fotograma *Blade Runner 2049*

Finally, we must refer to the presence of blue. In this case, it is associated with the change that the characters experience when they begin to live. First, we see this with Joi (in a blue dress), a hologram that can only move around one room but will manage to move freely thanks to the machine K acquires (figure 37). Again this tone is used when K discovers that he is not the replicant's son. His image is impregnated with a magenta light (figure 38), although by helping Deckard, he can make his own decisions, a scene in which the lighting that hovers over him is tinged with blue. (Figure 39).

Figure 37. Joi in a blue dress



Source: Fotograma *Blade Runner 2049*

Figure 38. Image of K tinged in Magenta



Source: Fotograma *Blade Runner 2049*

Figure 39. The image in blue: K's decision



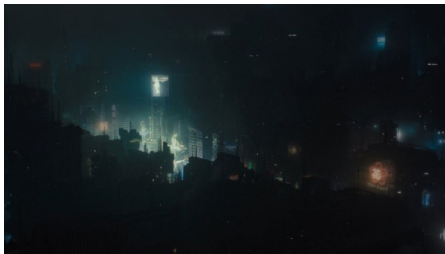
Source: Fotograma *Blade Runner 2049*

Here the protagonist comes full circle. K has taken control and has stopped submitting to others' orders; he has renounced being a machine for a human being.

3.4.3. *The lighting*

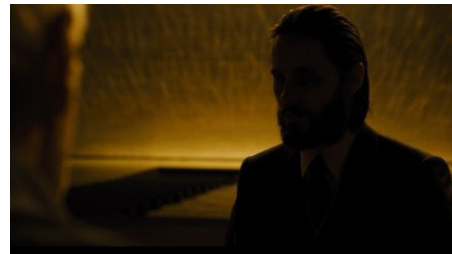
The lighting in *Blade Runner 2049* has a double meaning; on the one hand, by being a science fiction film, its main objective is to shape and make the futuristic atmosphere believable. On the other hand, it provides a dramatic meaning that emphasizes the intentionality of the light. An example of this is to give the city of Los Angeles, where the action takes place, a depressing and post-apocalyptic sense, in keeping with a space full of neon signs, which are antagonistic in the dark environment, at the same time they are a representation of the excessive technologisation of a decadent society (figure 40), which is why artificial lights are also used. Following the same line of this treatment of the light as an expressive element, it is important to highlight various images in which Wallace (Jared Leto) appears. This character plays the villain and is shown in semi-darkness and sometimes even becomes a shadow or silhouette (Figure 41).

Figure 40. Futurist City (L.A)



Source: Fotograma *Blade Runner 2049*

Figure 41. Wallace in semi-darknesst

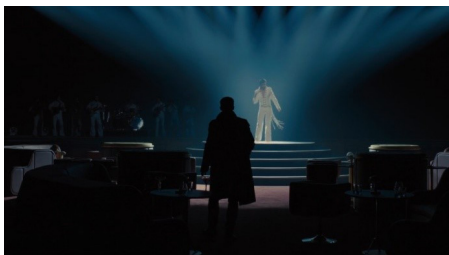


Source: Fotograma *Blade Runner 2049*

Spotlighting is used to light up the actors' faces. This has particular relevance in the scene we referred to above that directly affects K's main character when he takes control of his life and risks taking on responsibility for his own decisions as a human being. This spotlighting highlights the change and final development of the character (see figures 38 and 39). Besides, the use of backlighting recurs throughout the film. Some examples: K believes he is the child born (see figure 33); K finds the whereabouts of Deckard (see figure 31).

Deakins works with light to play a role in the story; it is an active part of the action and could be considered another character. Here, it is necessary to highlight the scene that recreates an Elvis concert through a hologram, where we can see the backlit silhouette of K (figure 42) and immediately after, through a set of lights that go off and on in tenths of seconds, K disappears completely (figure 43).

Figure 42. K backlit



Source: Fotograma *Blade Runner 2049*

Figure 43. Absence of K



Source: Fotograma *Blade Runner 2049*

4. Conclusions and discussion

In conclusion, the empirical analysis of the images of *Fargo*, *The man who wasn't there*, *Sicario*, and *Blade Runner 2049* have allowed us to meet the primary objective proposed in the research, given that the study of these four films has focused on examining the composition of the cinematographic image in Roger Deakin's work. Furthermore, we can affirm that the specific objectives have also been reached since we have observed and examined how framing, light, and colour are expressive elements of constructing the cinematographic story created by Deakin in these selected films.

Likewise, we have verified that there are similarities in the films, a greater use of close-ups (shown in graph 1, 3, 5, and 7), and within the classification of close-ups, the most used compared to others is the medium or bust shot (shown in graphs 2, 4, 6 and 8), intentionality in the application of the colours (shown in the results section), recurrence of spotlighting, thus indicating a constant and frequent use of these resources.

Likewise, and as a consequence of this, we have confirmed that the hypothesis raised can be verified since it is evident that Roger Deakin's work as a director of photography is crucial to the meaning of the film in which he works. A semantic purpose is conceived in his role as a cameraman, gained in the compositions of the images he creates from the technical-artistic resources he uses- framing, light, and colour- that expressively mark his work.

We can affirm that the creative construction of the images in Deakin's work is characterised by the recurrence of some of those expressive technical-artistic elements leading us to think that this director of photography has acquired his own style throughout his career. There are several reasons for this. Considering the variables, we observe that in all of the analysed films, as previously mentioned, the predominant frames are close-ups (the most expressive of cinematographic language, as they guide the spectator's gaze and highlight the characters). It has been used often in the four works (those created by the Coen brothers exceed 50% of the total number of frames, in those carried out by Villeneuve, its repetition is lower, but it is still the most used). This scale's insistent use, specifically the medium or bust shot, shows the director's intention. With this recurrence, Deakin can allow the viewer to delve into the characters.

Regarding the second unit of analysis, colour, an enunciative element, corroborates its symbolic connotations, related to emotions, sensations, or associated with specific characters or moments of the plot. Finally, regarding light, we can see

that backlights are repeated to highlight characters and create silhouettes to enhance emotions (spotlighting). The use of lighting in Deakin's work brings realism to the story. However, it is significant that in all the films, in addition to being used for descriptive purposes, there is also a constant in the application of spotlighting to reinforce the dramatic sense of the narrative.

Throughout this paper, we have attempted to reflect on the expressive power through photography direction in the profession of cinema, studying Roger Deakin's work, an architect of the image, a craftsman of light and reference in cinematography, whose ability to manage the narrative and dramatic structures have been demonstrated. Therefore, we believe that it is possible to generate a future debate around this perspective. This cinematographer's perspective invites us to explore emotional stories and, by extension, the human condition, thanks to the composition of the shot. His work certainly appeals to conscious analysis.

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